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ABSTRACT

A content analysis of selected Soviet newspapers and magazines was conducted to examine what cultural events from the United States were featured in the Soviet press, whether the event or artist was presented favorably or unfavorably, and whether the stories were used to make an ideological statement. Nine publications were examined over a three-year period. The 424 articles were divided into categories of performance arts, visual arts, general, literature, and cultural relations. The results indicated the expected "unfavorable," highly ideological statements based on news reports, but there was also a notable number of "neutral," journalistic reports about American events. In addition, the results indicated that: (1) a choice is made as to which events are covered by the Soviet press, and the fact that the event is taking place within the Soviet Union does not guarantee coverage; (2) articles were more favorable than unfavorable, with a portion being neutral in content; and (3) the Soviet press did use American cultural events as "stepping stones" for promoting the Soviet ideology, without labeling these as editorials, opinions, or analyses. (HTH)

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International Communication Division

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

THE PRESENTATION OF AMERICAN CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE SOVIET PRESS (1977-1979)

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Perceptions of one culture by another, of one nation's people by another, of one man by another, are all formed into what Walter Lipmann so perfectly described as "pictures in our heads".

These "pictures" are primarily the result of the information received on a daily basis from and through the international media. It is a given that the peoples of other nations derive many of the "pictures" of the United States through the reports in their own press.

Background research shows that inquiries into the role of the press in the foreign policy area were successfully completed by Mark W. Hopkins in Mass Media In the Soviet Union, by Bernard C. Cohen in his work The Press and Foreign Policy, by Robert W. Desmond in his The Information Process: World News Reporting to the Twentieth Century, and to some extent, by John Hohenberg in his Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times.

All four of these authors hint that the image of American abroad goes beyond the control of foreign policy makers into such areas as cultural events. It must be understood that none of the authors was willing to say that cultural programs, such as dance, music, visiting artists, and the cinema, have a profound effect on foreign policy although it is suggested that the success or failure of the cultural programs may be a mirror of the attitudes toward foreign policy.

The purpose of this study--a content analysis--was to look at selected Soviet newspapers and magazines and their presentation of American cultural events. Any mass media system generally tends to reinforce already established ideas about the outside world and to structure new ones. To some extent, the Soviet mass media have an easier time of establishing trust in foreign reporting because only approximately one per cent of the population have traveled

outside the country or have extensive and regular access to foreign publications. The Soviet mass media therefore have a captive and a disadvantaged audience.

The research questions centered on what cultural events from America were featured in the Soviet press in a selected time period and how the event or artist was presented--in a favorable or unfavorable light. The attitudes of many Americans is that the Soviets "always" or "almost always" present Americans in a negative fashion. Journalism students often comment "I'm sure whatever is written in the Soviet press that it will be propaganda, that is, anti-American."

Very little research is available on Soviet audience reaction to the material presented in the newspapers and magazines written and published in the USSR. The documentation of the precise role Soviet mass media play in forming attitudes is sketchy, at best.

During the course of the research for this study, it was noted that the Soviet people do seem to have an appetite for printed material from foreign countries, particularly the United States. During the summer Olympic games in 1980, visitors to the USSR were deluged with requests for books, magazines, and printed material. The customs officials in Moscow did spend a major portion of their time examining the magazines and periodicals being brought into the country by tourists. News magazines, such as Time and Newsweek, were confiscated at the port of entry.

The Soviet people seem more interested in western cultural affairs than Hopkins' found in his study in the late 1960s. In August of 1980, music by the American rock group, EAGLES, was blaring from a phonograph in the subway of Tbilisi. The black market rage for blue jeans continues

with top dollar being paid for the "in" brand of the season.

This study is a look at the presentation of American cultural events in the Soviet press from 1977 through 1979. These three years seem to be solid examples of the transition period which Hopkins' predicted was starting in the early 1970s.

HOW THIS STUDY BEGAN

Interest in the Soviet's presentation of American cultural events grew indirectly out of two research grants which were awarded to the author of this paper. The initial study, conducted during the summer of 1979, investigated cultural exchange programs in the Soviet Union. The study involved some content analysis of the press and was expanded to include the articles contained in this study. A content analysis for the years 1970 through 1976 is presently being conducted.

Interviews were conducted and background research involved the personnel of the Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Washington, D.C. and the translators and staff of The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Columbus, Ohio. Stuart Loory, a former New York Herald-Tribune Moscow correspondent and the present Cable News Network Moscow correspondent, was invaluable as a source.

During July and August, 1980, informal interviews and discussions were held with citizens in Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi, and Irkutsk, USSR, as background and verification sources. The interpreter, Robert J. Wahrer, was an indispensible asset.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question No. 1 WHICH AMERICAN CULTURAL EVENTS ARE COVERED BY THE SELECTED SOVIET PUBLICATIONS? American groups which tour the Soviet Union will receive the heaviest coverage. Those cultural events which are directly related to issues in the USSR will receive maximum coverage.

Research Question No. 2 IS THE PRESENTATION FAVORABLE, UNFAVORABLE, NEUTRAL? The presentation of the information shall be defined as "favorable" when the author uses descriptions, adjectives, or statements in a positive manner toward the United States or the group as Americans. "Unfavorable" shall be defined as negative, anti-American in its approach. Articles which are "neutral" in content and tone are those which could be defined as "objective reporting" or true journalistic pieces with no comment by the author.

Research Question No. 3 ARE THE STORIES ABOUT AMERICAN CULTURAL EVENTS USED TO MAKE AN IDEOLOGICAL STATEMENT? Does the author use the news as a basis for a comment on the United States and the ideologies of Americans or Soviets?

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Newspapers and Magazines

Eighty periodicals from the USSR are translated on a regular basis at The Current Digest of the Soviet Press in Columbus, Ohio. Selection of the newspapers and magazines was made in conjunction with the translators from that organization and was on the basis of a consistency in reporting both domestic and foreign cultural affairs.

The following publications were studied in the content analysis:

Pravda (Truth)
Izvestia (News)
Kommunist (The Communist)
Komsomolskaya pravda (Young Communist League Truth)
Literaturnaya gazeta (Literary Gazette)
Literaturnoye obozreniye (Literary Review)
Sovetskaya kultura (Soviet Culture)
Zarya Vostoka (Dawn of the East)
Inostrannaya Literatura (Foreign Literature)

Pravda and Izvestia are the primary newspapers of the Soviet Union with the remaining seven publications being magazines which are published regularly and are noted for their coverage of cultural events. The translations by the staff of The Current Digest were used and were supplemented by translations by Marianne Doyle of Dayton, Ohio for selected articles not reprinted by The Current Digest.

Categories of Content

The articles were divided into the following categories:

Performing Arts
- Dance
- Music
- Theatre

Visual Arts
- Cinema
- Painting and Graphics

General
- (includes essays on theory, court cases and obituaries)

Literature

Cultural Relations

(Only those articles which specifically had content on the above categories were used in this study. Many articles appeared in the Soviet press in 1979--in advance of the 1980 Moscow Olympics--which mentioned cultural events to take place during that summer. These were not included in this study.)

Number of Articles Found

A total of 424 articles were used in this study, with the following breakdown by year:

1977--103 articles studied.
1978--150 articles studied.
1979--171 articles studied.

Content--General or of American Event or Artist

The content of all articles was dissected in regards to its presentation of the event or artist as:

1. Favorable
2. Unfavorable
3. Neutral

Content--Was The Article About America Used to Make An Ideological Statement?

The content of all articles was studied and categorized into:

1. Article used by author to make an ideological statement.
2. Author made no ideological statement.

ANALYSIS OF METHOD

All of the 424 articles were translated by The Current Digest of The Soviet Press or by Marianne Doyle. The articles were then coded on special coding sheets with numbers assigned to the categories listed previously.

After the numerical tabulations were completed, articles dealing specifically with American cultural events were analyzed independently.

RESULTS

The data collected, according to previously established categories, is assembled on the following tables:

1977

	# of articles	# of articles (American)
Performing Arts		
Dance	1	0
Music	8	2
Theatre	10	0
Visual Arts		
Cinema	8	0
Painting	5	1
General	7	0
Cultural Relations	24	4
Literature	39	2
Total	103	9

1978

	# of articles	# of articles (American)
Performing Arts		
Dance	6	0
Music	21	1
Theatre	16	1
Visual Arts		
Cinema	19	0
Painting	6	1
General	7	0
Cultural Relations	16	5
Literature	59	2
Total	150	10

1979

	# of articles	# of articles (American)
Performing Arts		
Dance	7	0
Music	16	1
Theatre	19	0
Visual Arts		
Cinema	27	6
Painting	8	0
General	13	0
Cultural Relations	24	1
Literature	57	1
Total	171	9

Analysis of Articles By Year

In 1977, the data collected showed that nine articles appeared in the selected Soviet press. The articles were as follows:

March 23--Pravda--An article detailing a dialogue between Newsweek correspondent A. Friendly on the subject of an unnamed American jazz group touring Georgia, USSR, in 1973. Unfavorable to jazz group. Stated that "Western intelligence services, including CIA, are making active use of expanding cultural exchanges." Article used to make ideological statement.

May 25--Lit. gaz.--An article about new exhibition of Russian and Soviet painting at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Favorable to exhibit and to Americans. Discusses "Cultural ties are strengthening and developing". No ideological statement.

July 6--Lit. gaz--An article about meeting of Soviet and American Writers. Favorable to American writers, describing the dialogue as "fruitful and creative". No ideological statement.

August 10--Kommunist--A book review shich involves a lengthy discussion of the American attitudes toward Soviet literature. Unfavorable view of Americans. States "American market...books by renegades... Western publishers insulate their readers." Article used to make ideological statement.

August 14--Lit. Oboz.--A review of two of William Faulkner's books. Neutral. to Americans. Article makes no idological statement.

Sept. 5--Pravda--A news report on the international book fair in Moscow. Favorable mention of Maxmillan Publishing Co. and others participating. No ideological statement.

Sept. 20--Sov. kult.--A review of "The Spy Who Loved Me", the James Bond movie. Unfavorable review of the movie--"low grade product" and the tone of the article is sacrastic as shown in the statement "One fails to comprehend the surprise expressed..when offers to sell to socialist countries were all turned down." Article used to make ideological statement.

Oct. 6--Lit. gaz.--Review of article which criticized radio stations for failing to air Western popular music. Favorable to west. No ideological statement.

Nov. 2--Lit. gaz.--A dialogue with a U.S. citizen on tour of Soviet Union, discussing American music, cultural exchanges, etc. Favorable. No ideological statement in this question and answer format.

In 1978, the data collected showed that ten articles appeared in the selected Soviet press. The articles are as follows:

Feb. 1--Lit. gaz.--A music review. Favorable to five American recordings. No statement of ideology.

February--Ino. Lit.--A series of three articles (counted separately for this study) on the 1977 Soviet-American writers' meeting in Moscow. All three articles were favorable and all three articles were used to make ideological statements, particularly concerning foreign relations.

Feb. 22--Lit. gaz.--A discussion of the use of Soviet films on American television. Favorable to United States. Definitely makes an ideological statement.

March 1--Kom. pravda--A dialogue about a Soviet play on the American stage. Favorable. Makes no ideological statement.

March 2--Pravda--An article about American painting exhibit in USSR. Favorable. Promotional in nature. Makes no ideological statement.

April 30--Pravda--An article about international meeting of literary publishers. Simple news report about U.S. participation. Neutral. No ideological content.

June 7--Lit. gaz.--An article about Soviet writers visiting United States. Favorable comments about arts and literature. No ideological content.

June 7--Izvestia--A lengthy article about two Americans on cultural exchange program--not detailed--Article simply states one worked for Voice of America. Unfavorable and heavily ideological in content.

The articles which appeared in 1979--nine in all--are detailed as follows:

January--Lit. gaz.--Two articles (counted separately for this study) detailing the upcoming selection of films for the Cannes Film Festival. United States mentioned frequently as a contender. Neutral presentation. No ideological statements.

Feb. 5--Pravda--An article about the Cannes Film Festival. Participants, including U.S. contenders, are listed. Neutral in presentation. No ideological statement.

April 4--Lit. oboz.--A review of Arthur Hailey's novella "Landing Strip 08". Favorable with no ideological statements.

April 12--Izvestia--An article about Oscar Awards in Hollywood. Detailed about American protestors outside the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Unfavorable to U.S. Makes ideological statement in its presentation.

May 29--Sov. kultural--Article about Elton John in USSR. Presents this English artist as American. Unfavorable and highly ideological -- headline "Truty and Falsity about Cultural Exchanges".

June 11--Pravda--Report on the Cannes Film Festival winners. Highlights "Apocalypse Now" as winner. Unfavorable to U.S. films in general--supportive of "Apocalypse Now" as "...a work of great talent and courage by an artist whose conscience cannot reconcile itself to U.S. madness and barbarism". Makes an ideological statement.

August 27--Pravda--An article about "Apocalypse Now" as a winner at Cannes. Reiterates the June 11 report. Unfavorable and highly ideological in its discussion of the United States.

Sept. 9--Izvestia--An article about the Moscow Book Fair. Details participation by Maxmillan Publishing Co. Very favorable to U.S. No ideological statements.

DISCUSSION

This study began with the investigator having many "pictures in her head" of the presentation of American cultural events in the Soviet press. The perceptions or beliefs one has always held are often generalizations with no validity. This content analysis was begun if for no other reason than to support or dispel the perceptions of this author.

What this content analysis shows is that there are no clear pictures, no definite lines, no generalizations which can be made about the presentation of American cultural events in the Soviet press. This study showed the expected "unfavorable", highly ideological statements based on news reports but there were also a noteable number of "neutral", journalistic reports about American events.

One of the expectations of this investigator as stated under the first research question was that "those American groups which tour the Soviet Union will receive the heaviest coverage" This is the nature of news. However, it must be noted that based upon this study and extensive interviews in the Soviet Union, and the observations of the translators of The Current Digest, the Soviet press failed to cover some events which could be considered "news". During the 1977-1979 period, twelve U.S. films premiered in the USSR, two U.S. symphonic orchestras toured Moscow and Leningrad, and three American rock groups were on tour. These were ignored by the Soviet press. Although one article did mention that "Apocalypse Now" had been shown recently in the USSR, the primary thurst of the article was the movie as a winner of the Cannes Film Festival. The review of the James Bond movie did not state whether it had been shown in the Soviet Union.

While in the Soviet Union, this investigator found some new American novels and non-fiction books available in the bookstores. This study shows only William Faulkner's two books and Arthur Hailey's novella were reviewed in the Soviet press during the immediately preceding three-year period.

Although the actual numbers of favorable (15) vs. unfavorable (8) are highly weighted toward favorable, the Soviet press did use American cultural events as a basis for essays and statements of ideology. Unlike the practices of the mass media in the United States, these articles were not labeled as editorials, opinions, or analysis. This was one of the major complaints the Soviet citizens expressed about their media. Although they stated they were "used to it", many mentioned that factual pieces should be discernable from opinions.

The five "neutral" pieces were of particular importance in this study. These news reports and book reviews could easily have appeared in any U.S. publication and be considered good journalistic pieces.

It is impossible to discern--based on this content analysis--why the Soviet press chose to cover certain events while totally ignoring others. None of the sources used for information--including the citizens of the USSR--could say with certainty why not. The answer most often given was "The press just does not."

In direct answer to the three research questions posed in this study, this investigator feels confident to state:

1. The selected Soviet press presents a variety of American cultural events--performing and visual, general, cultural relations, and literature. A choice is made as to which events are covered and the fact that the event is taking place within the Soviet Union does not guarantee coverage.

2. The articles about American cultural events presented in the Soviet press from 1977-1979 were more favorable than unfavorable with a portion being "neutral" in content.

3. The Soviet press did use American cultural events as "stepping stones" for promoting the Soviet ideology and did so without labeling these in any way as opinion, editorial, or analysis.

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